

# BOOK REVIEWS

CALIFORNIA MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

**SKIN SURGERY—3rd Edition**—Edited by Ervin Epstein, M.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Dermatology, University of California Medical School; Formerly Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine (Dermatology), Stanford University Medical School; Chief of Dermatology and Syphilology at Highland-Alameda County Hospital; Consultant to Oakland Area Veterans' Hospital. Charles C Thomas, Publisher, 301-327 East Lawrence Avenue, Springfield, Ill. (62703), 1970. 647 pages, \$48.50.

Surgery of the skin has become an increasingly important part of dermatologic training and practice. This multiauthored volume is an attempt to present the most recent concepts and procedures in this rapidly expanding field. The book is directed principally toward the dermatologist but contains material of interest to all physicians concerned with skin problems of their patients.

This third edition is an extensively revised and enlarged volume compared with the preceding edition published in 1962. The number of pages and chapters has been increased almost twofold but the price of the book, unfortunately, has been increased about fivefold.

The book has 41 chapters divided into five sections. These are: General Considerations, Cold Steel Surgery, Electrosurgery, Special Procedures, and Special Locations of Diseases. The 32 contributors are either dermatologists or surgeons. The editor interprets skin surgery in the broadest sense and includes subjects ranging from traditional dermatologic procedures to diverse topics such as skin grafting, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, topical fluorouracil, immunotherapy, laser surgery, and silicone injections.

A possible criticism of the book is that some of the included techniques involve operative procedures far beyond the surgical training of most dermatologists. The editor, however, states in his introduction that special training is required for the performance of some of the procedures. The multiplicity of authors results in some repetition and lack of continuity.

The section on Special Procedures is extremely interesting but little effort is made to distinguish clearly between those procedures which are still in the realm of experimental therapy and those which are generally accepted. For example, Belisario's chapter on cytotoxic therapy of cutaneous cancer is a very controversial subject and such techniques currently have extremely limited application. Similarly the use of intralesional fluorouracil for the treatment of warts has not been proved either safe nor effective. Silicone injections, in addition, can be used only in controlled investigative studies. Comments by the editor would have helped to place some of these procedures in their proper perspective.

The editor in his own chapter does express his diminishing enthusiasm with dermabrasion for acne scars. His statement that acne surgery such as drainage of pustules increases scarring is one with which many dermatologists will disagree.

In summary this book contains much of value for the dermatologist or other physician who performs skin surgery. However, each physician must critically evaluate many of the procedures prior to their use in his practice

in terms of his own training, the most current status of the procedure, and any possible medical-legal implications.

JOSEPH W. LANDAU, M.D.

**DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN: HEALTH, NUTRITION & SCHOOL FAILURE**—Herbert G. Birch, M.D., Ph.D., and Joan Dye Gussow. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. and Grune & Stratton, Inc., 757 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. (10017), 1970. 322 pages, \$7.50.

In the preface, the senior author, Herbert Birch, states "we have written this book to call attention to the health problems which underlie the school failure of impoverished children. . . . What we hope for is awareness of the size and scope of the danger confronting children born of and into poverty. . . . What we hope for is a program that will break the continuous intergenerational chain of poverty."

In the current climate of confrontation politics in which very often the message of social injustice and urge for reform is lost in the stridency and abrasiveness of rhetoric, this book is an outstanding exception. The pleading is most dispassionate. The text is dull reading at times. Instead of rhetoric there is an overwhelming array of facts, figures and charts. It is a reference book and it is unlikely many readers will read it cover to cover.

As a reference book it is superb. The pertinent literature is well-organized and clearly presented with sufficient detail and reproduction of the original data that one need not depend solely on the authors' inferences. There is an excellent thirty-three page reference list. There are very complete author and subject indices for easy cross-reference. He draws upon a world-wide literature and marshalls an impressive brief for his case.

The subjects that he covers in detail in relation to nutritional deficit are infant mortality and perinatal morbidity, low birth weight (prematurity) and ensuing handicaps, the bodily growth and development consequences of malnutrition, and finally the cognitive and emotional deficits due to malnourishment in mother and child. He also covers the issues of medical care for the poverty level mothers and children.

The final chapter called "Retrospect and Prospect" is an important contribution. It underscores the multifactorial nature of the health, nutrition, and learning interactions. The pitfalls of simplistic solutions of "compensatory education" and the simplistic explanations such as genetic inferiority are well-discussed. He gives an historical perspective and ends on a note of hope for meaningful amelioration based on both knowledge and a commitment to humanitarian goals.

The senior author is both a Ph.D. psychologist and a pediatrician. He is eminently qualified to select and interpret the research data. Although he has an admitted bias there is a fair and exhaustive presentation of the work in the field of malnutrition and its consequences. The book is pitched at the level of a professional audience, but I am sure that it can be read with profit by intelligent lay people. It would be well if legislators and others responsible for social planning read this work.

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